

Yorkshire History Prize 2013

The First Prize (the Beresford Award) in this year's competition for essays of up to 10,000 words has been awarded to;

Nicholas J Verrill of Barnet, Hertfordshire for his essay on *'The Religion of the Yorkshire Gentry 1509-1531: The Evidence of Wills'*

Mr Verrill was the only prize-winner this year, the 27th year of the Prize. The rules provide for the award of a second prize in the longer essay category but none of the other entries was adjudged suitable. The same was true of the entries in the shorter essay competition (up to 5000 words) for the Bramley Award and no award was made.

Mr Verrill is currently a Teacher of History at The Broxbourne School in Broxbourne, Herts. He obtained his History PGCE at Homerton College, University of Cambridge last year, having completed an MA in Mediaeval History at the University of Leeds in 2011, funded by two scholarships from the university. He gained a distinction and the Marion Sharples Prize for his MA dissertation having graduated at Leeds the previous year with First Class Honours. Mr Verrill grew up in Barnet and History has been a passion for as long as he can remember. His special interests are late mediaeval and early modern European History.

The prize-winning essay examines 53 wills made by members of the Yorkshire gentry over a period of 22 years from 1509 for signs of fundamental Catholic beliefs such as purgatory, the 'communion of saints', intercession, redemption through charity and the efficacy of the Mass. The evidence thus uncovered, far from confirming a common perception of the pre-Reformation Church as corrupt and moribund, with an alienated, disillusioned laity, points to the gentry's lively faith in orthodox doctrines expressed in both private and public forms of worship.

J M Bradford

September 2013